

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 9-14 and 21-24 as reflected in the following complete listing of the claims and their current status:

1. (Previously presented) A dynamic stabilization system for stabilization of a spine, comprising:

a stabilization element configured to span between at least two vertebrae of the spine and defining a longitudinal axis along the length of said element:

at least two bone anchors, each having a bone engagement portion; and
at least two connectors for connecting a corresponding one of said bone anchors to said stabilization element, at least one connector including;

a bearing member attached to said stabilization element;

a flexible element supported within said bearing member with said bone anchor extending through said flexible element, said flexible element contacting said bearing member substantially along said longitudinal axis of said stabilization element to permit relative pivoting between said corresponding bone anchor and said stabilization element; and

an adjustment element for adjusting the flexibility of said flexible element.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously presented) The dynamic stabilization system according to claim 1, wherein:

said stabilization element includes an elongated spinal rod;

said bearing member is a rod end bearing including a rod engagement portion; and

said flexible element is a bearing element of said rod end bearing.

4. (Original) The dynamic stabilization system according to claim 3, wherein:
said bearing element is received within a bearing race of said rod end bearing; and
said adjustment element is arranged to compress said bearing element within said bearing race.

5. (Original) The dynamic stabilization system according to claim 3, wherein said rod engagement portion includes a bore for receiving a portion of said spinal rod therein and a set screw for clamping said spinal rod within said bore.

6. (Original) The dynamic stabilization system according to claim 1, wherein:
at least one of said bone anchors includes a stem having a threaded portion;
said flexible element includes a bore for receiving said stem therethrough; and
said adjustment element includes a nut engaging said threaded portion and arranged to compress said flexible element as said nut is threaded onto said threaded portion.

7. (Original) The dynamic stabilization system according to claim 6, wherein said at least one of said bone anchors includes an intermediate portion between said stem and said bone engagement portion, said intermediate portion configured to support said flexible element so that said flexible element is compressed between said intermediate portion and said nut when said nut is threaded onto said threaded portion.

8. (Original) The dynamic stabilization system according to claim 1, wherein another of said connectors is configured to substantially rigidly connect one of said bone anchors to said stabilization element.

Claims 9 – 14 (Cancelled)

15. (Previously presented) A dynamic stabilization system for stabilization of a spine, comprising:

a stabilization element configured to span between at least two vertebrae of the spine:

at least two bone anchors, each having a bone engagement portion and a stem portion; and

at least two connectors for connecting a corresponding one of said bone anchors to said stabilization element, at least one connector including a unitary bearing member associated with said stabilization element and including a bearing race mounted within said bearing member and a flexible bearing element mounted within said bearing race, said flexible bearing element configured to receive said stem portion of said bone anchor therethrough.

16. (Original) The dynamic stabilization system according to claim 15 wherein said at least one connector includes an adjustment element for adjusting the flexibility of said flexible bearing element.

17. (Original) The dynamic stabilization system according to claim 16, wherein said adjustment element is arranged to compress said bearing element within said bearing race.

18. (Original) The dynamic stabilization system according to claim 17, wherein:

said stem of least one of said bone anchors includes a threaded portion; and

said adjustment element includes a nut engaging said threaded portion and arranged to compress said flexible bearing element as said nut is threaded onto said threaded portion.

19. (Original) The dynamic stabilization system according to claim 15, wherein:

said stabilization element includes an elongated spinal rod;

said bearing member is a rod end bearing including a rod engagement portion configured for engagement to said spinal rod.

20. (Original) The dynamic stabilization system according to claim 19, wherein said rod engagement portion includes a bore for receiving a portion of said spinal rod therein and a set screw for clamping said spinal rod within said bore.

Claims 21 –30 (Cancelled)

31. (Previously presented) The dynamic stabilization system according to claim 15, wherein:

said flexible element has a substantially spherical outer surface; and

said bearing race defines a substantially spherical inner surface engaging said outer surface of said flexible element.